

# I - INTRODUCTION

This is the sixteenth annual report to Congress on voting practices in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the Security Council. It is submitted in compliance with Public Law 101-167, and covers voting in 1998. The report statistically measures the voting of UN member states at the 53rd General Assembly in the fall of 1998 in comparison with the U.S. voting record (Section II). In addition to an alphabetical listing of all countries, the report presents the voting record by regional groups and by selected bloc groupings. It also lists and describes General Assembly resolutions selected as important to U.S. interests, again with tables for regional and political groups (Section III). Security Council resolutions for the entire year are described, and voting on them is tabulated (Section IV). A final section pulls together information from the other sections and presents it by country (Section V).

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 53rd session of the General Assembly opened on September 9 and held 93 plenary sessions before recessing on December 18. It adopted 273 resolutions, about the same as in the past two years, but well below the 332 resolutions of 1990. This reflects the success of the United States and others in their effort to reduce the number of resolutions—by combining some issues, considering others only every two or three years, and dropping some entirely. The main subjects of the resolutions continued to be arms control, the Middle East, and human rights.

Of the 273 resolutions adopted, 78% (213) were adopted by consensus. This figure and those of recent years (75.2% in 1997, 72.9% in 1996, 76.6% in 1995, and 77.4% in 1994) illustrate the high rate of consensus agreement in the work of the General Assembly.

## Voting Coincidence with the United States

On non-consensus issues, i.e., those on which a vote was taken, the average overall General Assembly voting coincidence of all UN members with the United States in 1998 was 44.2%, down from 46.7% in 1997, 49.4% in 1996, and 50.6% in 1995. This decline in the past three years reverses the steady and dramatic increase in the several years since the end of the Cold War. (See the graphs at the end of this section.) The 50.6% in 1995 was the first time the coincidence figure had exceeded 50% since 1978, and is more than three times the low point of 15.4% in 1988. When consensus resolutions are factored in as votes identical to those of the United States, a much higher measure of agree-

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ment with U.S. positions is reached. This figure (88.3%), which more accurately reflects the work of the General Assembly, has been in the 87-88% range since it was first included in this report in 1993. It was 87.3% in 1997, 87.3% also in 1996, 88.2% in 1995, 88.8% in 1994, and 88.3% in 1993.

The coincidence figure on votes considered important to U.S. interests (55.8%) is once again higher than the percentage registered on overall votes (44.2%). The graphs at the end of this section illustrate this point. A side-by-side comparison of important and overall votes for each UN member is at the end of Section III.

The following table illustrates the gradual decrease in voting coincidence with the United States since the post-Cold War high of 50.6% in 1995. This decrease is reflected also in the votes on human rights and Middle East issues. The trend has been generally up, however, on arms control votes. (See also the graph on votes by issue categories at the end of this section.)

Year	Arms Control	Middle East	Human Rights	Overall Votes
1998	64.0%	22.5%	62.8%	44.2%
1997	65.8%	26.2%	61.9%	46.7%
1996	62.3%	28.3%	68.3%	49.4%
1995	60.9%	35.2%	81.0%	50.6%

As in past years, Israel (94.1%) and the United Kingdom (74.5%) were among the highest in voting coincidence with the United States. Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Uzbekistan were also in the top five. Most members of the Western European and Others group (WEOG) continued to score high coincidence levels; the average was 65.2%, which is down from 70.9% in 1997, reflecting a growing divergence between the United States and the European Union (which dropped from 73.0% in 1997 to 66.7% in 1998). The Eastern European group also scored high again; the average was 61.7%, down from 68.6% in 1997 and 1996, mirroring the decrease by other European countries. After this group's meteoric rise in coincidence with the United States following the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, it now largely matches the coincidence level of the Western European countries. Most other geographic and political groups also decreased in voting coincidence with the United States in 1998. (See the graph at the end of this section.)

Among the lowest scoring countries were Cuba, India, DPR of Korea, Laos, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, and Vietnam, all under 25%.

## Realization of U.S. Priorities

At the 53rd General Assembly, realization of U.S. priorities was again mixed. U.S. arrears in payment of assessed dues, and the linking of arrears payments to UN reforms, continued to make it difficult to exert U.S. leadership at the United Nations. In a disappointing defeat, the U.S. candidate for the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) failed to win election, despite virtually unanimous praise for her and despite pledges of support from more than enough countries to be elected. This outcome was a clear sign that the UN membership is seriously concerned about U.S. arrears, despite our being the single largest contributor to the UN system and being current in our assessments for the past many years. Unhelpful rhetoric again characterized the debate on the Middle East. There was no resolution noting the shortcomings of human rights practices in Cuba. A resolution critical of “unilateral coercive economic measures” was adopted over U.S. opposition. The U.S. embargo of Cuba—viewed as extraterritorial, interventionist, restrictive of free trade, and contradictory to the post-Cold War spirit of cooperation—remained a contentious issue.

However, active U.S. engagement and assertive multilateral efforts did lead to a number of successes:

— **On arms control issues, adoption of a resolution deploring nuclear testing in South Asia** (by India and Pakistan) in May 1998. Also, a resolution on **U.S.-Russia bilateral nuclear arms** negotiations was adopted without objection. A consensus resolution gave some additional impetus to negotiations on a **fissile material cut-off** treaty at the Conference on Disarmament. The General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution moving forward the effort to eliminate the threat of **landmines** to civilians. On the other hand, a resolution critical of nuclear deterrence, and probably hindering the pace of nuclear disarmament, was adopted over U.S. objection. A draft resolution encouraging ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the work of the CTBT preparatory commission, which the U.S. Government supported, was withdrawn by its sponsors to avoid a divisive vote after India and Pakistan introduced “killer amendments.”

— **Prevention of an overrun on the 1998-1999 UN budget.** A budget of \$2,532,331,000 was approved in 1997. The budget remained within the Congressional cap and was revised downward by over \$5 million at the end of 1998 as a result of favorable exchange rates, lower inflation, and a higher than anticipated vacancy rate for professional staff. On a less upbeat note, a budget outline for 2000-2001 was approved in December 1998 at a level higher than the 1998-1999 budget. However, this is only the first step in the 2000-2001 budget process, and we will be working to ensure that budget discipline is maintained. We will review the detailed budget estimates in 1999.

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— **On Security Council reform** the General Assembly decided not to adopt any resolution without the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members. The United States welcomed this outcome, viewing resolutions on this subject at this time as destructive to the delicate deliberative process taking place in the open-ended working group.

— **Creation of a review process for the international criminal court** that gives the United States an opening to seek changes in the Rome treaty.

— **Adoption of U.S.-initiated resolutions on human rights** in the former Yugoslavia and Kosovo. Adoption of these and other resolutions on human rights sent a strong message that such matters are not purely internal issues. Also, the Assembly adopted other human rights resolutions cosponsored or supported by the United States: human rights in Burma, Cambodia, Iran, Iraq, and Rwanda, strengthening the rule of law, forced and involuntary disappearances, arbitrary executions, follow-up to the world conference on women, improvement of the status of women in the UN Secretariat, traditional practices affecting the health of women and girls, trafficking in women and girls, and an international year of older persons. The United States voted alone against a resolution on a right to development due to objectionable language on globalization and macroeconomic issues combined with a proposal to draft a convention on the right to development. All other industrialized countries abstained on the resolution.

— **Adoption of resolutions on terrorism and drugs**, again highlighting and moving forward the struggle against these two scourges. The omnibus drug resolution focused on implementing the outcome of the June 1998 General Assembly special session devoted to countering the global drug problem.

— **Adoption of resolutions which contain U.S.-authored language on the benefits of trade liberalization**, the essential role of the private sector in development, and the responsibility of national governments to create a stable macroeconomic environment. The resolutions also included language supporting globalization, foreign investment, and market access, and rejecting the use of protectionist measures.

— **Adoption of a U.S.-sponsored resolution** reiterating the importance of implementing the 1996 UN declaration **against corruption and bribery** in commercial transactions.

— **On Middle East issues, Israeli credentials were adopted** without comment despite the efforts by some to make them invalid for the occupied territories. On the other hand, the resolutions on the Middle East retained much of the unbalanced and outdated rhetoric of the past, did nothing to support the negotiating process under way between the parties, and continued to inject the General Assembly into issues that are the subject of direct negotiations. Moreover, it was not possible to adopt a “positive” resolution to note the progress made by the parties to date in the Middle East peace process. Also, at a special

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session in July requested by the Arab Group, the General Assembly, over U.S. opposition, upgraded the status of the Palestinian observer mission to the United Nations, a decision that presages a continuing Palestinian effort to attain enhanced observer status in constituent UN technical bodies.

## SECURITY COUNCIL

The Security Council was again in 1998 a major focus of U.S. attention in the United Nations. The continuing tendency toward consensus among its members facilitated the Council's adoption of 73 resolutions during the year, fewer than during the post-Cold War peak of Security Council action in 1992-1994, but more than in each of the past three years and far more than during the Cold War era when Council action was often frustrated. The Council also issued 38 presidential statements; these are consensus documents issued by the Council president on behalf of the members. The large number of resolutions adopted and statements issued reflects the continuing reliance of member countries on Security Council action to assist in resolving threats to peace and security following the end of the Cold War.

The Security Council was again heavily involved in giving direction to UN peacekeeping and mediation efforts throughout the world in 1998. These efforts are described in Section IV.

Voting coincidence percentages for Security Council members were again high. Most resolutions were adopted unanimously: 68 out of 73 (93%). There were no vetoes and no other negative votes on Security Council resolutions in 1998. There were only 7 abstentions out of the 1,095 votes cast on the 73 resolutions adopted. The abstentions were by China (4 on Yugoslavia and 1 on Haiti), and Russia (1 on Yugoslavia and 1 on Haiti).

## FORMAT AND METHODOLOGY

This voting report continues the feature added in 1993: an additional column in the tables in Section II (Overall Votes), which presents the percentage of voting coincidence with the United States after including consensus resolutions as additional identical votes. Since not all states are equally active at the United Nations, we have credited to each country a portion of the 213 consensus resolutions based on its participation in the 82 recorded plenary votes. Each country's participation rate was calculated by dividing the number of Yes/No/Abstain votes it cast in plenary (i.e., the number of times it was not absent) by the total of plenary votes. This is the same methodology used to combine important votes and important consensus actions since 1989.

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This report also adds to the Important Votes tables (in Section III) an additional column presenting the percentage of voting coincidence with the United States after including important consensus resolutions as additional identical votes. The figures in this column are comparable to the figures for overall votes plus consensus resolutions described in the above paragraph.

These columns that include consensus actions provide another perspective on UN activity. In our view, they reflect more accurately the extent of cooperation and agreement in the General Assembly.

Other columns in the report remain the same. The presentation is consistent with provisions of PL 101-167, and the methodology employed is the same since the report's inception.

The tables in this report provide a measurement of the voting coincidence of UN member countries with the United States. However, readers are cautioned about interpreting voting coincidence percentages. The percentages in the last column, using the older methodology, are calculated using only votes on which both the United States and the other country in question voted Yes or No; not included are those instances when either abstained or was absent. Abstentions and absences are often difficult to interpret, but they make a mathematical difference, sometimes major, in the percentage results. Inclusion of the number of abstentions and absences in the tables of this report enables readers to include them in calculating voting coincidence percentages if they wish to do so. The percentages in the second column from the right reflect more fully the activity of the General Assembly. However, this calculation assumes, for want of an attendance record, that all countries were present or absent for consensus resolutions in the same ratio as for recorded votes. Moreover, the content of resolutions should be considered in interpreting the figures in either column. There may be overwhelming agreement with the U.S. position on a matter of less importance to us and less support on a resolution we consider more important. These differences are difficult to quantify and to present in one or two coincidence figures.

A country's voting record in the United Nations is only one dimension of its relations with the United States. Bilateral economic, strategic, and political issues are often more directly important to U.S. interests. Nevertheless, a country's behavior at the United Nations is always relevant to its bilateral relationship with the United States, a point the Secretary of State regularly makes in letters of instruction to new U.S. ambassadors. This is also why copies of this report are presented to UN member foreign ministries throughout the world and to member state missions to the United Nations in New York. The Security Council and the General Assembly are arguably the most important international bodies in the world, dealing as they do with such vital issues as threats to peace and security, disarmament, development, humanitarian relief, human rights, the environment, and narcotics—all of which can and do directly affect major U.S. interests.













